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'*Like a Modern Indian Canterbury Tales':* Continuities in Imperialist Tradition in Selected Works of William Dalrymple

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14108797

Article History: Submitted-14/09/2024, Revised-14/10/2024, Accepted-19/10/2024, Published-31/10/2024.

Abstract:

Modernity has undertones of a colonial attitude similar to the Enlightenment period. Both are ambiguous and replete with templates and standards that are different in former colonies of the Empire. Dalrymple, an occidental scholar who writes about India, its colonial history and modernity —orientalises, stereotypes, and criticises the post-colonial modern India— by comparing it with that of Britain. The paradox of William Dalrymple's identity is the most strategic aspect of his own 'worldliness'. The current research accentuates how Dalrymple works to navigate and mediate memory at individual and collective levels with a focus on *The Age of Kali* (1998), *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India (*2009), and *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, And the Pillage of An Empire (*2019). Drawing on Edward Said's *'Orientalism'* and using Hayden White's argument that every historical narrative is a result of selection, emphasis, and interpretation, the formal construction of the text is critically examined. From a postcolonial perspective, the research aims to know how Dalrymple's writings function in light of continuities in imperialistic tradition.

Keywords: Oriental, Imperialist, Memory, Occidental, Dalrymple, Postcolonial.

Introduction:

Whether as a critic, nonfiction writer, British historian, curator, or Scottish citizen residing in India, William Dalrymple illustrates the often-paradoxical nature of identity in an increasingly migratory and globalised world. A person situated in a web of cultural and theoretical

contradictions: contradictions between his Occidental British persona and living in a former British colony; contradictions between his political voice and professional position; contradictions between the various ways he is read; contradictions in the way he is situated within the academia. The intimate connection between Dalrymple's identity and his non-fiction works, and the paradoxes these reveal, demonstrate something about the constructedness and ambiguity of cultural identity. The paradox of William Dalrymple's identity is the most strategic aspect of his own 'worldliness' (Said's *The World, the Text, and the Critic*), providing a key to his works' interests and beliefs. This identity is itself a text that intersects with and is articulated by every work he writes. Often, what Dalrymple writes is perceived as an accurate and factual representation of a culture or a country by non-esoteric readers.

William Dalrymple is the author of several works, beginning with *In Xanadu* (1989), *City of Djinns* (1994), and very recent *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire* (2019). Names matter. If merely the names of the books are examined attentively—*White Mughals, Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, The Last Mughal, From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium, Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India, Koh-I-Noor: The History of the World's Most Infamous Diamond* (2017)—it speaks of a reeking imperial nostalgia, or fulfilling Benjamin Disraeli's remark in his novel *Tancred*, 'The East was a career', and subsequently justifying Edward Said's pronouncement in his seminal work *'Orientalism*,' that being interested in the East was something bright young westerners would discover to be an all-consuming passion, as an academic field, a style of thinking, and a corporate institution. In her book *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing (2006)*, Debbie Lisle describes how:

> 'Colonial travel writing was very effective at widening and popularising the scope of Orientalism: unlike academic texts, travelogues were able to disseminate the power relations of Empire to a much wider audience. The combination of factual statements and fictional descriptions made colonial travelogues popular with readers of history, science and current affairs as well as with readers of fiction.' (28,29)

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10448030

The very act of travelling is a luxury in itself, and according to Gilbert and Johnston, 'to talk about travel is to enter into a terrain redolent with markers of imperialism' (1). Travel writing is the written expression of cultural encounters from the traveller's perspective. Travel writings create the past and the present, employ specific tactics and frame encounters into a historical narrative. In an interview with freelance journalist Sanjay Austa, Dalrymple describes his devouring penchant for India, which also leads to a flattering caricature of the nation reduced to a simple item, like stamps, railroads, or even pigeons. 'Some people fancy stamps, some railways, some pigeons…Well, I fancy India.' (Austa, Indian Historians Are Navel-Gazing). In an article titled 'Inevitable Revolutions', Gyan Prakash deems Dalrymple as a revisionist historian and underscores how globalisation has compacted space and time. Rebecca Dorgelo, in her work *Travelling into History*, emphasises that Dalrymple makes 'British India, rather than India itself' (16) his primary theme and this antiquated portrayal echo the usual colonial transition from imperial city to colonial station. Indian historian Ramchandra Guha asserts that Dalrymple's 'knowledge of this country is so superficial.' (Soofi. I Am No Doped Orientalist). Dalrymple's works, according to these theorists, depict a wealthy British protagonist who goes to India and sometimes other oriental territories and writes about it. As a nonfiction author, Dalrymple's works may be analysed from various perspectives. Truth is what the average reader associates with nonfiction. To classify Dalrymple's works as nonfiction provides a substantial rhetorical advantage and lends an air of veracity to his writing. The colonial view of truth gets reinforced. As Lisle explains,

> 'Despite its indeterminate literary status, the travelogue's ability to "write across" literary genres is potentially transgressive…nobody quite knows what to call travelogues should not be cause for alarm; rather, it should foreground the possibility that the genre's "in-between" position might be the key to its political transformation.' (31)

In Dalrymple's writings, the interplay between various aspects is compelling as he constantly switches between different approaches, styles, and mediums. As Dalrymple often blurs the lines between representation of the past and the present in India, how his readers think about the present gets influenced by his portrayal of the past. In *The Savage Mind*, Claude Lévi-Strauss contends

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that 'history is never simply history, but always "history-for," history written in the interest of some infrascientific aim or vision.' (257). Dalrymple's work supports largely stereotypical Orientalist views of India rather than opposing it. Hayden White, in essay 'Historical Texts as Literary Artifact', argues

> 'That there are at least two levels of interpretations in every historical work: one in which the historian constitutes a story out of the chronicle of events and another in which, by a more fundamental narrative technique, he progressively identifies the kind of story he is telling- comedy, tragedy, romance, epic, or satire, as the case might be.' (57)

In light of this emphasis on text, the present research seeks to draw attention to the ways in which Dalrymple employs specific sources to further his portrayal of a particular description of colonial India. Dalrymple's works may be interpreted as belated echoes or repetitions of earlier colonial interactions and representations. Dalrymple's image of empire challenges conventional understandings of the British Empire's rule over India. Dalrymple's works are essential as an example of the rhetorical functions of popular nonfiction because of his wide readership, interest in colonial history and discourse, and the fact they cross several genres. One of the assessments of Dalrymple's work that has received the most significant acclaim is by Indian author Khushwant Singh.

> 'Of this year's books, I rate William Dalrymple's Nine Lives very high. Dalrymple writes about India with more knowledge and elegance than does any Indian I know…Dalrymple never passes judgment, nor questions the rights of these people to the truth as they see it. It is a priceless documentary of different people whose existence I was only vaguely aware of. I feel enriched after reading Nine Lives and strongly recommend it.' (22)

Texts always shape reality, whether they are literary or historical, because 'none are transparent in projecting reality.' (Walia,Shelley.viii). A positive review from one of India's most renowned

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writers serves as a stamp of approval, reassuring readers they have found the right book. To say a white man's gaze about India is 'more knowledgeable' than any Indian reinforces the representational orientalist stereotypes. This study casts doubt on the authority of Dalrymple's depiction of the history of India and highlights the pervasive imperialist undercurrents in his writings. Du Bois, in his book *Souls of Black Folk,* defined the concept of 'double consciousness' where people of colour internalise white imagery that depicts them as artificial creations, which leads to a distorted self-perception. Bakhtin, in *Discourse in the Novel (1934),* emphasises the same as 'heteroglossia', which generates two meanings, two voices, and two languages.

Works of Dalrymple mediate the memory of readers by shaping their individual and collective memory as readers perceive themselves through his narrative frame, often resulting in a 'double consciousness.' The study critically examines Dalrymple's writings — *The Age of Kali* (1998), *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* (2009), and *The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, And the Pillage of An Empire* (2019) — from a postcolonial perspective by drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism.* According to Roland Barthes, historical discourse is 'essentially an ideological elaboration or, to be more specific, an imaginary elaboration.' (138) William Dalrymple portrays the British Empire in an unrealistically favourable light due to a nostalgic and idealised narrative, as Walia asserts that narrative meaning cannot be deduced from facts but rather results from the story's design. (vii) The objective is to know how Dalrymple's writings —bring together a colonial era and contemporary postcolonial India, illuminating the assumptions, attitudes, and ambiguities that characterise both eras— function in light of imperialism, the rhetorical stances and arguments in his writings, and how they connect to imperialist discourses.

DISCUSSION:

Dalrymple describes the incredible tale of how one of the world's most spectacular empires collapsed and was succeeded by a dangerously uncontrolled private enterprise in his book *The Anarchy* (2019). William Dalrymple's most ambitious and captivating work to date is a hitherto untold account of the East India Company that serves as an important cautionary tale about the first global corporate power. In this book, Dalrymple conjectures the argument by saying:

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> 'At this book has attempted to show…it was not the British government that seized India in the middle of eighteenth century, but a private company. India's transition to colonialism took place through the mechanism of a for- profit corporation, which existed entirely for the purpose of enriching its investors.' (394)

In a rudimentary sense, it is well known that the British Empire, of which East India Company (EIC) was a part, was responsible for India's slavery and colonisation (as EIC was given the Royal Charter in 1600). Jenny Sharpe, in his book *Allegories of Empire,* describes 'a reading of the narratives that go into contemporary remakings of the past' (14) which Dalrymple does through this book. The historiographical narrative which Dalrymple presents by 'placing received history in a new context of authorial insight.'(Walia,Shelley.ix) Nicholas Dirks's *The Scandal of Empire,* challenges the Dalrymple school of thought by demonstrating how avarice, double dealing, corruption, exploitation, and brutality were integral to establishing company control in India. Dirks deftly read the British record of eighteenth-century India to demonstrate that the scandal of colonial murder and oppression was systematic rather than the result of a few bloodthirsty and unscrupulous officials, as Dalrymple maintains. Dalrymple highlights that his book:

> 'The Anarchy is based mainly on the company's own voluminous miles of records. The documents from its head office, and the despatches of its Indian operatives to the directors in Leadenhall Street…The often fuller and more revealing records of the company's Indian headquarters in the National House and Fort William, Calcutta, can today be found in the National Archives of India…' (xxxii)

Works like Dalrymple's that place a premium on primary sources may be understood in light of Tony Ballantyne's observation that archives from colonial times produce imperialism rather than just recording it. As Hayden White underscores that every historical text is a literary artefact — Dalrymple develops narrative by evidence selection and repression, emphasis, tone, and perspective modification— in which historian uses literary methods to produce a story that will be meaningful to the reader. As Shelley Walia contends 'how it really was' gets translated by the

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imaginative creative mind into 'how it shall be remembered.' (ix) Dalrymple illustrates, in the mid-nineteenth century the Victorians thought of empire 'as a mission civilisatrice: a benign national transfer of knowledge, railways and the arts of civilisation from West to East.'(xxv) Racial superiority and the civilising mission were used to legitimise the empire but Dalrymple asserts 'there was a calculated and deliberate amnesia about the corporate looting that opened British rule in India.'(xxv) Conquering new territory means taking it away from people of a different race or ethnicity. For what Dalrymple mentions as 'corporate looting' Will Durant, in his booklet titled *The Case for India (1930),* scathingly critiques the British government's policies, practices and British conquest of India. Durant mentions, a lifelong career of plunder and illegal activity by a trading company utterly without scruple or principle had infiltrated, destroyed a high civilization, bribed, murdered, stolen and annexed India. Further, Durant exclaims that Britain's 'rape of a continent' which left the majority of Indians impoverished on the eve of their independence. In his book, Durant affirms staunchly that

> 'By 1858 the crime of the company so smelled to heaven that the British Government took over the captured and plundered territories as a colony of the Crown; a little island took over half a continent.' (12,13)

For Durant, it was 'the most sordid and criminal exploitation of one country by another in all history'. However, Dalrymple argues in his book *The Anarchy* that the 'East India Company was a model of commercial efficiency'(xxvi) and even after 100 years in business, Dalrymple claims there were only 35 full-time workers who worked out of the company's headquarters. Nonetheless, with such a small team, they pulled off a 'corporate coup unparalleled in history.'(xxvi) To be clear, Dalrymple does not set out to provide a comprehensive history of the East India Company or even 'still less an economic analysis of its business operations.' (xxxi). Dalrymple contends that the pillage, plundering, numerous wars, massacre of millions, and conquest of princely kingdoms in India were 'business operations.' According to Edward Said, 'Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as a corporate institution', and East India Company was a reflection of this notion. Orients were described by an organisation like EIC, who endorsed Orientalism, trained the Orients, colonised the Orients, and kept military control over them. According to Dalrymple, 'The EIC was,

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as one of its directors conceded, "an empire inside an empire", with the power to make war or peace anywhere in the East.' (xxx)

Dalrymple tries to sanitise the shady history of British colonialism in his book *The Anarchy* by mediating and drawing attention to his assertion that the East India Company (a self-sustained corporate company) was responsible for colonising India, not the Crown or the British government. The fundamental concepts presented in the book should be taken with scepticism due to the inherent prejudice in the work. Since the organisation's foundation, both the British government and the Crown were supportive of the East India Company. Shelley Walia, in his book *Evelyn Waugh: Witness to Decline*, describes the foregrounding of parallels between storytelling and history-telling are presented 'with the view to show the role of the teller, the listener, and the tale.' (vii) Dalrymple consciously decided to publish *The Anarchy* with two different subtitles, and it is instructive to consider the implications of this decision. In the United Kingdom, the subtitle of the book is *'The Relentless Rise of An Empire'*, and in India the subtitle is '*The East India Company, Corporate Violence, And the Pillage of An Empire.'* When asked whether Dalrymple writes for a certain demographic, he said, 'I write for the British audience' in an interview with Sanjay Austa (2002). Most of the population, including the audiences for whom Dalrymple writes, is not familiar with the colonial narrative as it is not narrated by the colonised. According to White, historians interpret their material in two ways: 'by the choice of a plot structure – which gives to their narrative a recognisable form – and by the choice of paradigm of explanation, which gives to their arguments a specific shape, thrust, and mode of articulation.' (67). The enduring appeal of Dalrymple's books demonstrates a general openness to his wistful, romantic vision of Britain's imperial history. Although Dalrymple's celebration of imperial travel and Indian civilization vary from book to book, his overall goal of rehabilitating the history of the British empire for a predominantly Western audience is constant. In the preface to *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*, Dalrymple says:

> 'By rooting each story in the sometimes dark and unromantic aspects of modern Indian life, with the narrator acting merely as a mirror...as far as is possible, each of the characters tells his or her own story, with only the frame created by the narrator, a little like a modern Indian Canterbury Tales.' (xvi)

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Edward Said opines that 'Orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient renders its mysteries plain for and to the West.' Within the 'frame formed by the narrator' in *Nine Lives,* Dalrymple becomes the voice of the persons he interviews. Dalrymple juxtaposes his travels and role as a narrator with Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales (1392)*, showing his presumption about narrative structure and storytelling that is 'little like a modern Indian Canterbury Tales.' Since Dalrymple himself is the narrator—and asserts that the 'narrator merely serves as a mirror'—who consequently denies agency to the characters in *Nine Lives.* Characters tell their stories as they get mirrored as narrators from a mirror, which Dalrymple himself is, making characters more like his 'subjects'. The characters are not formed by their identities instead portrayed through the narrator's point of view, just as Chaucer did in *The Canterbury Tales*. It is interesting to note the words 'dark', 'unromantic', and 'modern Indian life' because they emphasise the author's preconceived notions of what is 'bright' and 'romantic' in his mind. In this case, the author/narrator is an occidental traveller in the modern India in search of the 'sacred India', almost reinforcing the stereotypical orientalist discourse. *Nine Lives* is ultimately concerned with the spectre of modernity, with 'modern' being one of its essential terms in the subtitle *'In Search of the Sacred in Modern India.'* Dalrymple's title foreshadows a fundamental clash between the religious and modern; in contemporary India, the quest for the sacred is imperative.

In *Communicative and Cultural Memory (2010)*, Jan Assman discusses how 'cultural memory is based on fixed points in the past…in the context of cultural memory, the distinction between myth and history vanishes…cultural memory reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as "ours." This is why we refer to this form of historical consciousness as "memory" and not just as knowledge about the past.' (113) Dalrymple's longing for imperial Anglo-Indian ties might be seen as a metonym for a more pervasive British imperial longing. Dalrymple's writings influence the formation and dissolution of both individual and collective memory in readers. For Debbie Lisle, this nostalgic attachment is typical: 'Travel writers maintain their relevance in a globalised world by mimicking their colonial forebears.' (3) Dalrymple echoes Karl Max's observation that 'they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented' by depicting India as 'the other' and exotic. Dalrymple further writes in *Nine Lives*:

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> 'Such are the humiliations of the travel writer in the late twentieth century,' I wrote in my diary that night. 'Go to the ends of the earth to search for the most exotic heretics in the world and you find they have cornered the kebab business at the end of your street in London.'(xii)

In *Culture and Truth* (1989), Renato Rosaldo opines that 'someone deliberately alters a form of life, and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to the intervention…In any of its versions, imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of 'innocent yearning' both to capture people's imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination.'(70) Dalrymple's dismay is clear, as he travelled to the extremities of the planet in quest of exotic heretics, only to find one who was a former marketing manager for the refrigerator firm Kelvinator with a first-class MBA. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, thinks that 'the freedom of travel writers is not the freedom of all: it is the luxury of mobility that permits them to travel, and to write' (4). It is important to note that class, cultural, and economic capital are prerequisites for mobility. 'To spend most of my time since I was free to make that choice. From my first visit to the region as an eighteen-year-old backpacker, I was completely overwhelmed: India thrilled, surprised, daunted, and excited me.' (Kali, xv). This reflects Dalrymple's mobility and affluence.

Edward Said emphasises 'strategic positioning', which describes the author's position in a work with the Oriental material he discusses. Dalrymple's *Nine Lives* is a series of essays, each examining the religious practices of a different Indian individual. In most cases, the essays begin with William's visit to the location where the featured religion is practised, followed by an interview with a representative member of the faith selected by him. Dalrymple's remark — 'helped me communicate to my subjects'—demonstrates how methodically he has placed himself into the narrative structure. Even though he emphasises being in the shadows, the reader subsequently encounters his voice, representation, and perspective. The book's strategic (re)construction of Indian villages, bazaars, and palaces does not depict India's timeless tradition but rather how certain village rituals, industries, agricultural exports, political structures, and cultural systems promote British hegemonic standards of modernity. The book's juxtaposition of India's 'sacred' with a form of 'modernity' permeated by the author reveals the essential and

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hierarchical political connection between Britain and India. Dalrymple, in his book *Nine Lives*, says:

> 'As you leave Gurgaon and drive down the Jaipur Highway, it is like heading back in time to an older, slower, pre-modern world...cars and trucks are beginning to give way to camel and bullock carts, suits, denim and baseball hats to dusty cotton dhotis and turbans. This is a very different India indeed, and it is here, in the places suspended between modernity and tradition, that most of the stories in this book are set.'(xiii)

Economically, the colonial administration strengthened India's commercial agricultural and landholding structures while importing British industry and undermining the country's artisanal goods. One may conclude that India's relative lack of modernity resulted from Britain's self-sustaining presence on the subcontinent. Dalrymple's observations and anecdotes about his time there often enter the realm of history. Numerous routes promote a conservative image of India and its history. Principal among them is a strong desire for Orientalise. Dalrymple shares his experience when he mentions

> 'Other people I met had their worlds impacted by modernity in a more brutal manner: by invasions, by massacres, and by the rise of often violent political fundamentalist movements.' (xv)

The phrase 'worlds impacted by modernity' has the undertone of imperialist attitude and further perpetuates the primitive/modern dichotomy in which the former colony struggles to adapt with the rise of modernity and industrialism. Edward Said asserts that 'every writer on the orient assumes some oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the orient, to which he refers and on which he relies.' (28) *The Age of Kali: Indian Travels and Encounters* expressly concerned with India's ill-fitting relationship with modernity. It is clear in the title of *The Age of Kali,* which refers to Hindu cosmology:

> 'that time is divided into four great epochs. Each age (or yug) is named after one of the four throws, from best to worst, in a

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> traditional Indian game of dice. … As I was told again and again on my travels around the subcontinent, India is now in the throes of the Kali Yug, the Age of Kali, the lowest possible throw, an epoch of strife, corruption, darkness, and disintegration.' (xiii)

This simultaneously highlights Dalrymple's narrow understanding of Hinduism and exoticizes a system of religious thought. Dalrymple insinuates that the 'darkness' and 'disintegration' of the 'Kali Yug' are the result of modernity by omitting to indicate how long the 'Kali Yug' has been in existence. While 'Kali Yug' refers to the dark age in the whole world, Dalrymple only sees 'Kali Yug' in India and not in the West. This makes for a fascinating juxtaposition. Dalrymple continues by saying:

> 'Rather ominously, the very week I decided on The Age of Kali as the title for this book, Atal Behari Vajpayee, India's first BJP Prime Minister, let off his 'Hindu' nuclear bomb at Pokhran, in what some in India have seen as a sign that the Kali Yug is now approaching its apocalyptic climax.' (xiv)

Here, Dalrymple tries to strike a rather blatantly insensitive and offensive correlation between religious and national identity with a nuclear activity. Not only does Dalrymple make a questionable link between the title of his book and the nuclear bomb test, but he also forgets that Britan's first nuclear test, 'Operation Hurricane' (1952), was conducted before India let off a 'Hindu' nuclear bomb. It is interesting and amusing while the former colony's independence and nuclear testing are indicators of the 'Kali Yug' and the end of the world, yet the imperial United Kingdom's nuclear testing is a symbol of modernity and independence from America. Dalrymple makes a contrast throughout *The Age of Kali* between the problems of contemporary India—such as partition, post-independence, and cultural challenges—which were intrinsically the gifts of the coloniser which he neglects to emphasise. *The Age of Kali* is a mostly unfavourable account of modern India. Dalrymple in the section 'In the Kingdom of Avadh' and 'Under the Char Minar' references the cities of Lucknow and Hyderabad as examples of India's previous splendour. He says,

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> 'It is often hard to believe this [past cultural importance] as you drive through Hyderabad today. For while the city is still fairly prosperous— certainly a far cry from the urban death rattle that is modern Lucknow— fifty years on it is a pretty unprepossessing place, ugly, polluted, and undistinguished, all seventies office blocks and bustling new shopping centres.' (199)

Dorgelo argues that labels like 'unprepossessing' and 'undistinguished', and by extension 'declining', are applied to everything that moves away from an idealised Orientalist past. (243) Perhaps predictably, this pessimism about the status of modern India is particularly pronounced in the compositions in *The Age of Kali*. The fall of British control in India is not portrayed as a benefit for India or Indians anywhere in *The Age of Kali*. In fact, it is often seen as the moment when decay in Indian culture really picked up speed. According to Dalrymple, people of India were less rejoiced as they celebrated their independence over the loss of British imperial influence.

> 'In Britain there may have been widespread celebrations marking fifty years of Indian Independence, but in India there has been much less rejoicing' (83).

Jenny Sharpe characterises the 'raj revival' as a 'representation of decolonization as the moment of disaster' that 'preserves a founding period of pomp and magnificence as a memorial to imperial power' (143). In *The Age of Kali*, this propensity toward a 'raj revivalist' depiction is prominent. Modern India is shown as a volatile, frightening, and scary location. Throughout *The Age of Kali*, this instability is attributed to the dislocations caused when 'traditional' India encounters 'modern' Western concepts. Dalrymple's contrast of India under the British and deteriorating independent India via tales of female fragility—the misery of Dalit women, prostitutes, Hindu widows, and participation in sati—emphasizes the kindness and uprightness of the British.

Conclusion

As Edward Said eloquently puts it, 'for a European or American studying the Orient', it is impossible to deny the primary conditions of the actuality: that one encounters the Orient as a

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European or 'American first, as an individual second.' Dalrymple's meticulously researched and documented writings are a testament to his unwavering commitment to the history of Imperial Britain and colonial India. Nevertheless, Dalrymple's writings regarding the people, their voice, and rewriting of the erstwhile colonised should be taken with a grain of salt. According to Said, being European or American in such a circumstance is no static reality. It meant and still means being conscious, however faintly, that one belongs to a power with distinct interests in the Orient, and more importantly, that one belongs to a region of the globe with a certain history of participation in the Orient dating back practically to Homer's time. Graham Huggan writes of Dalrymple, 'Often travel writers are preferred by the media, not merely as reviewers of "Indian" stuff, but also as authoritative commentators on "Indian" (and other "Third World") civilizations and cultures.' (275). In a virtuous circle, Dalrymple's fame and expertise boost the credibility of the claims and interpretations he offers in his writings. It is understandable that works with such obvious symbolic significance as *Nine Lives* and *The Age of Kali* are widely read. However, to get beyond ingrained imperial attitudes and narratives, it is essential to challenge such continuities of Orientalist portrayals. After decades of pioneering studies in postcolonial and decolonial studies, one thing has been emphasized to former colony inhabitants or colonized is not to ingrain the narratives of the colonisers. In his book *English and the Discourses of Colonialism (1998),* Pennycook talks about colonialism not merely as a site of colonial imposition but also as a site of production. He contends 'the practice of colonialism produced ways of thinking, saying and doing that permeated back into the cultures and discourse of the colonial nations…cultural constructs of colonialism have lasting effects even today.' (2) A romanticised view of the British Empire is sold in the works of William Dalrymple. It suggests that readers are open to hearing about the empire in this way and reflects a conservative desire and fascination for imperialism. Despite Dalrymple's compelling depiction of India, it seems to rely heavily on imperial nostalgia and orientalist stereotypes that need to be checked and balanced appropriately. In order to counter and dismantle the continuities of Imperialist narratives and discourses, it becomes a rigorous duty to write, counter and strike Imperialism.

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